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More Time for Leisure in the Farm Home

Madge J. Reese

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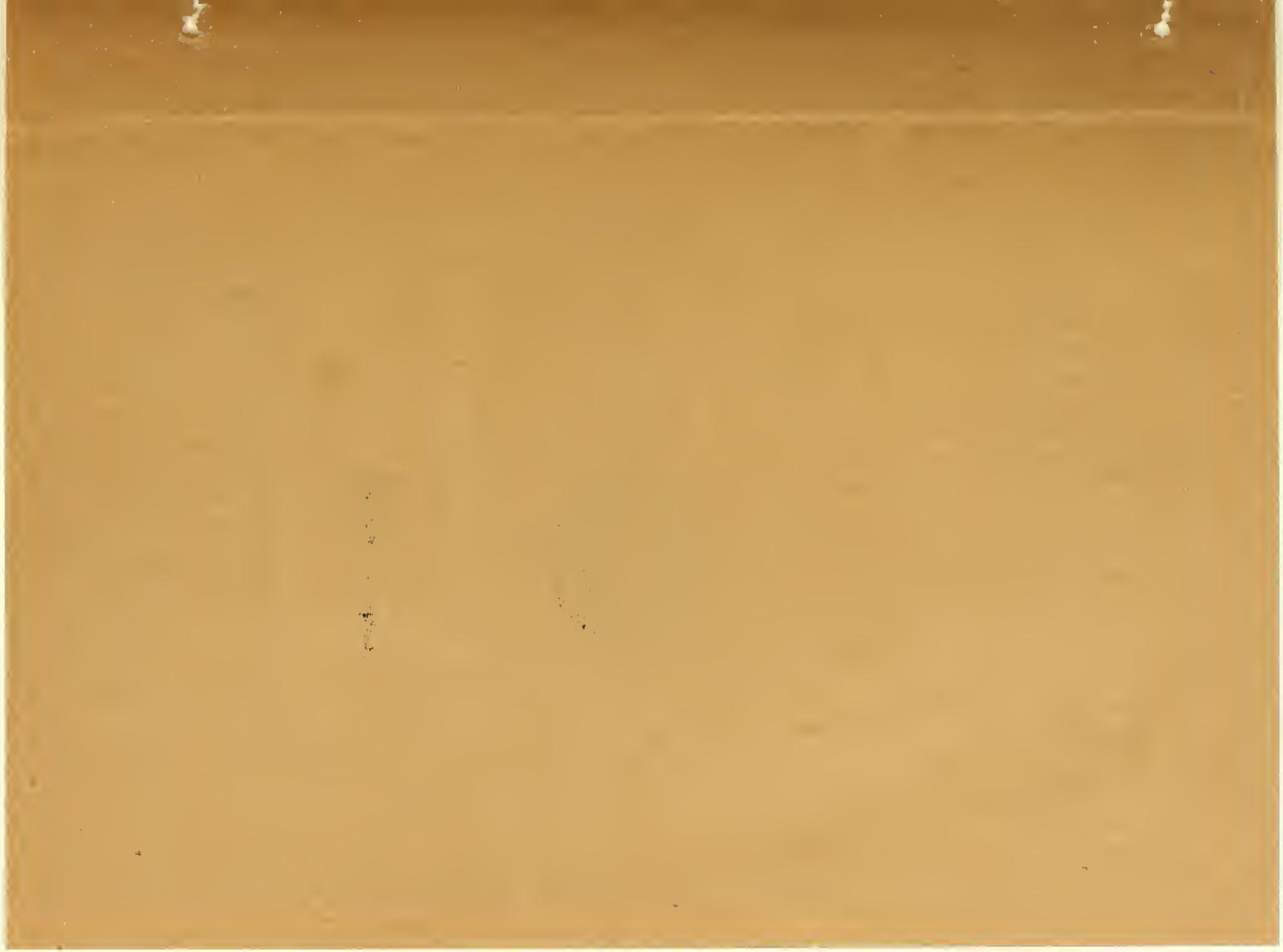

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics

Extension Service Circular 138 November, 1930

MORE TIME FOR LEISURE IN THE FARM HOME*

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It was our old friend Benjamin Franklin who said, "Employ thy time well if thou meanest to gain leisure! and since thou art not sure of a minute, throw not away an hour! Leisure is time for doing something useful. This leisure the diligent man will obtain; but the lazy man never. * * * Industry gives comfort, and plenty, and respect."

Benjamin Franklin left it to us to determine what the "something useful" is for leisure time after the work is done. For most farm home makers the "something useful" means reading; studying or writing; visiting with the family or entertaining friends in the home; playing with the children or helping them with lessons; sitting and listening to the radio, and sometimes just sitting; taking a daily nap; doing some fascinating needlework or some creative art work; tending the flower garden perhaps; participating in home demonstration meetings, farm organization, social and church affairs of the community; taking an automobile ride; going occasionally to some event in the town or city; spending a few days or weeks away from home each year in camp, or visiting friends and relatives.

Leisure may or may not mean recreation. It may be thought of as an opportunity to do what one wants to do rather than what one must do; an opportunity for self-expression. It is true, leisure appears to be increasing for the farm population. It is sometimes said both men and women need training for leisure, to make of it a fine thing rather than a harmful one. I believe we shall agree that most farm people have the capacity for being leisurely if the opportune time presents itself, but wise time spending in work and in leisure is as essential for the success and happiness of the family as wise money spending.

It is said that women are inheritors of the Industrial Revolution. Benefits of the Industrial Revolution have not yet reached into all farm homes. Power equipment and modern home conveniences, however, are rapidly finding their way into rural homes. Spinning and weaving are gone out of the home forever. Baking, canning, and preserving are rapidly passing out of the urban home. No doubt it is an economical use of time and money to can and preserve in the farm home if the fruits and vegetables are produced on the farm or can be secured at low prices. To some extent sewing, laundering, and baking are passing out of even the rural home. In a large number of farm homes butter making is a thing of the

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past. Industrial changes will not take away all the traditional occupations from the farm home but they do lighten the work load and release more time for useful leisure.

A woman in the home may be a producer, a contributing unit to society. There is an increasing number of urban women who are going out into the gainful occupations or who are combining home and outside work. Do not misunderstand, home making also is considered a gainful occupation. They either do not find in the home sufficient activity to satisfy them, or the reward is not sufficient to enable them to give all their time to the home and maintain the desired standard of living for their families. Rarely do these reasons take the farm home maker out of the home. She has the opportunity which the urban woman seldom has to develop home-business enterprises which mean financial gain. Some farm women prefer to give more time and energy to dairying, poultry raising, market gardening, and commercial flower raising, and either employ help in the home, or send out the laundry, buy the bread and ready-made clothing for the family. The job of the home maker in the country can be the most interesting of all jobs as it takes great versatility, unusual skill, and continuous study. The only labor that is drudgery is that without the accompaniment of learning.

Time is not the only important factor in the possibility of leisure for the family. (1) There must be health and energy to enjoy and make good use of leisure. (2) Social and religious views, customs, and conventions may influence the type of recreation. (3) Education and social background determine the degree of satisfaction secured. (4) Fashion often dictates - it seems to be midget golf in urban centers these days. (5) Worry and the best benefits derived from leisure do not mix well. (6) Last but not least, there must be money to secure certain desired forms of leisure. In the studies of 2,886 farm families made by Dr. E. L. Kirkpatrick,* with average family expenses of $1,597, the average annual expenditure for recreation amounted to $22.50. Farm-home budgets set up by farm women in the more recent county farm-home economic conferencesshow that serious consideration is given to the recreation of a farm family of five in the following items: Spokane Co., Wash., $50; Washoe Co., Nev., $100; West Virginia, $85; Franklin Co., Vt., $57; Oregon, $157.

As incomes increase and standards of living rise the cost of leisure also increases. Commercial leisure is with us to stay as evidence of our advancing standards of living; the movie, dance hall, amusement parks, and outdoor sports. The domestic hearth fire still burns in most farm homes, and how long it will continue to burn is largely the responsibility of the parents within the home. No greater heritance can be left a young man or woman than the love of home; the ability to find a certain amount of enjoyment and satisfaction within it and within their own resources.

The urge to raise the standard of living is a rightful desire of both the industrial worker and the farmer. Popular education has stimulated this desire in the farming population. Perhaps the chief sources

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*Kirkpatrick, E. L. The Farmer's Standard of Living. U. S. Dept. Agr. Bul. 1466. 63 p.

of ideas and ideals have been consolidated schools, good roads and automobile travel, the press, the moving picture, expositions and fairs, and the work of the Cooperative Extension Service of the Agricultural Colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture. The shortening of the workday for industrial workers has no doubt had an influence on the standard of living. Shorter hours give the opportunity for observing the dress, manners, and living conditions of others.

Research or investigation in rural standards of living has developed in two distinct lines: (1) Studies of household expenditures; and (2) the use of the home maker's time. This investigation work is being done largely by the home economics research workers at the State agricultural colleges. Time studies have been conducted in five States in cooperation with the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture, and a number of bulletins presenting the results have been published. An extensive time study is now in progress in the Bureau of Home Economics. Extension service agents have given valuable assistance in this investigational work. The following table shows the total number of hours per day farm home makers spent in preparing meals, clearing away meals, cleaning the house, laundering, mending, sewing, purchasing, management, care of the family, other home-making duties, and in the farm and outdoor work:

Working Hours per Day for Home Makers

	Number Farm Homes Reporting	Average Number Hours per Day
Oregon	288	9.1
Washington	137	9.0
Nebraska	328	10.7
South Dakota	100	9.4
Rhode Island	102	7.7

If the Rhode Island farm woman was fairly represented by those reporting, she does very little of the outdoor farm work except to help care for the poultry. Three-fourths of the rural homes in the State have electricity. Washing is done by machine in one-half of the homes studied, and a large proportion send out part or all of the laundry. One-half of the homes have hot and cold running water and one-fourth more have piped cold water. More than half have furnaces. We shall look forward to the day when a still greater number of farm homes in all sections of the country can be as well equipped.

In these studies, a complete and careful record of a work week was kept by the home maker, the week selected being a normal one for the season. An effort was made to secure a representative number of records from different types of farms in different sections of the State. Also supplementary information was secured which gave the size and composition of the family, the household equipment, working conditions, and something of the home maker's experience and aspirations. The similarity of the results in most cases indicates that the rural home makers use their work time in quite a uniform manner throughout the country.

It is easily noted that the working hours of the home maker are sharply reduced as the children grow older. For instance, when the average size of the household is 5.6 persons and the youngest child under 1 year of age, the hours per week are about 73, while the hours per week are 59 in a household of 4.6 persons with the youngest child between 10 and 14 years. This decrease is due, of course, to the smaller amount of physical care which the older children need. Time given by home makers to the care of a child under 1 year old is 3 times that given to a child between 1 and 6, and 12 times that given to a child of grade-school age. Time given to the proper care and training of children is time well spent even though other household duties must be neglected. In the Oregon study it was found that four-fifths of the farm home makers' working time is given to household needs and one-fifth to farm and other activities. Feeding and clothing the family and the usual routine housework accounted for seven-eights of the time the farm home makers gave to the household. Food activities alone required almost half of it.

The opinions concerning work and time as reported by 332 California home makers are of interest. The complete summary of opinions published by the California Extension Service is being left with you, only a few follow:

What part of your home making do you enjoy most?

145 - Cooking	4 - Washing
63 - Sewing	1 - Shopping

What part of your home making do you dislike most?

74 - Washing dishes	11 - Sweeping
54 - Washing	1 - Early rising

If you had $1,000 to spend on home making how would you spend it?

192 - Home and ground improvement
181 - Electric and other improvement
30 - Bathroom added
18 - Piano or radio

If you had more leisure time, in what way would you like to use it?

110 - Read and study
78 - Club, church, social
14 - Do art work
15 - Resting

What will bring more leisure in the farm home? Do we not think that 9 to 10 hours of heavy or routine work on the part of the woman in the home are too much to insure a reasonable amount of leisure for herself and for the family? How much easier it is to diagnose than to prescribe the

remedy or effect the cure. Increases in farm income, the development of utilities in rural districts, and in some cases the changes of farm operations to make possible farm income might be considered fundamental to bring about more leisure. If money could be spared to the same extent as time, the problems could be more easily solved. Help could be employed in the home, if available. Time and energy-consuming activities might be done outside the home, as the laundering, the baking, the sewing. Since money does not grow on the proverbial tree these days, what is the next best suggestion?

In the home-demonstration program time saving for the home maker has always been given special emphasis. Cutting down the half-acre kitchen; the rearrangement of the kitchen; the installation of needed equipment, sometimes home made, will serve the purpose. The proper selection of house furnishings which need little care, and the best methods of doing housework all help. Without question the managerial ability of the home maker is a most important factor. The sense of the relative importance of the use of time counts as much as skill and speed. Some ordinary tasks can well be left undone - ironing of sheets and some of the simpler garments; the frequent making of fancy dishes, especially desserts, cakes, and pies. Certainly a fair allocation of household jobs among all members of the family should exist in every farm home.

The woman in the home is realizing that business-like planning means more work done and more time for play. A written time schedule is of value to the housekeeper who has not yet arrived at a satisfactory adjustment between desires and needs and the time available for their accomplishment. A schedule is a written plan of work for the week, showing what tasks are to be done each day and the hours for doing them. By keeping a check the home maker discovers wherein she can gain time on the original schedule. Of course she allows in her schedule regular periods for rest and relaxation sometime during the working day. Such schedules tend to help anyone, home maker or farmer, business man or office girl to be more systematic in work planning. Leisure in the home is very dependent upon the system of farming and managerial aspects of the farm activities as the home activities must necessarily be adjusted at times to meet the best interests of operations on the farm. Therefore, the farmer and the home maker, the whole family for that matter, must cooperate and plan together to bring about the desired leisure for the family, especially for the mother.

A thought from Chancellor Brannon of Montana I leave with you, "Intelligence, industry, and thrift are the three dominant characteristics requisite for the enrichment of rural life * * * The exercise of intelligence, thrift, and industry will be mirrored in wise budgets made for the annual expenditures in the home and on the farm. They will be exhibited in the wise adjustments of life and expense levels, which high-powered salesmen can not disturb. These three factors, adequately employed, will lead to enrichment of rural life rarely realized by parents and children in our country homes. Again, the exercise of intelligence, industry, and thrift will make healthful and cultural recreation possible. Farming requires a sharply ordered program and the program is seasonal. Nevertheless,

work and time can be budgeted as well as money. Periods of recreation can be definitely scheduled so that work will be accelerated and greater success achieved in a richly diversified rural life.

"While intelligence, industry, and thrift are foundational factors in the enrichment of rural life, its continuance and advancement are dependent upon the correct and intensive education given both to youths and adults in rural communities."

Leisure is after all very largely a state of mind - a sense of values - taking time to do the thing you would like to do instead of the thing you think you have to do. Perhaps the greatest of all prevarications is "I am busy," "I haven't time." If one needs help, to whom does one go for assistance? To the loafer? Never! but to the already busy person. "A place for everything and everything in its place" is the epigram of order. It has a parallel - time for everything and everything done on time. Time schedules help in getting things done on time but a sense of value as to what really needs to be done helps most.

"Man's work is from sun to sun but woman's work is never done" as applied to the farm home is poor philosophy, so is the 8-hour day on the farm - 8 hours before dinner and 8 hours after. Something is wrong if either represents necessary conditions. There is little to attract in a country life so circumscribed. If it ever did apply as a general condition it is not true of American farm life to-day. Only as we do get away from it will the country hold the elements in its population that it should and must hold if it is to endure; if it is to flower and fruit into the best place in the world in which to live and work.